

The junking of history

Time Warner's Home Box Office, joined by PepsiCo, is having a bit of trouble celebrating Black History Month in a truthful way. An HBO-Pepsi poster and advertisement honoring black achievement features a large picture of the pyramids, and many smaller images, including one of the Sphinx.

This means that two of America's best-known corporations have officially bought into the historical howler believed by many Afrocentrists: that blacks built the pyramids and have been robbed of credit for it. Quoting the lyrics of a song, the poster says: "We are the builders of the pyramids, look what you did . . . so much to tell the world, the truth no longer hid."

Worse, this stuff is being injected into the schools. HBO and Pepsi sent the posters and other materials to 20,000 predominantly black schools and community groups. So honest teachers in these schools now have to explain the corporate seal of approval given to a historical claim that isn't true. ("Sounds like we need a history lesson," the chairman of HBO said when his Black History poster was described to him.)

This is no isolated example. The culture is now seriously plagued with deeply felt assertions that aren't true but are slowly sliding toward respectability anyway. Think back over the assertions that have won a measure of acceptance in the past year or two: the denial of the Holocaust; Oliver Stone's notion that the mafia and many government officials conspired to kill President Kennedy; the idea, depicted in a TV documentary, that a black U.S. Army regiment liberated Dachau and Buchenwald (tough-minded, honest veterans of the regiment stood up and said it wasn't true), and the supposedly strong influence of Iroquois thought on the U.S. Constitution, now taught in many schools.

Truth beyond fact. Behind the rise of rhetoric and pure assertion is a growing contempt for facts. "What we are witnessing is the transformation of facts into opinion," wrote the editors of the *New Criterion*. Note the number of times that commentators argue that the facts don't really matter. When the Tawana Brawley hoax was revealed, the *Nation* ran an article saying, "In cultural perspective, if not in fact, it doesn't matter whether the crime occurred or not." The facts were irrelevant, it seems, because Brawley's story line reflected the broader reality that whites have abused blacks over centuries. In other words, forget about facts. Just tell stories that convey emotional truth.

This is the climate HBO and Pepsi responded to, probably without much thought. Under different condi-

tions, the corporations might have been just as willing to assert that the Irish invented jazz and the Cherokees developed styrofoam.

"We're in a day and age in which I can make any claim I want," says Deborah Lipstadt, a professor at Emory University. "I can say I believe the Buffalo Bills won the Super Bowl. Then I say that it's my opinion and I have a right to it, and you're supposed to back off." Lipstadt should know. She is the author of *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*.

The Nazi slaughter of 6 million Jews is exhaustively documented. Many of the killers, survivors and soldiers who liberated the camps are still alive. Yet the people who deny that the Holocaust occurred have made great headway, simply by stating their claim loudly and often. A

Gallup poll last month showed that 33 percent of Americans think it seems possible that the Nazi extermination of Jews never happened.

"Good students come in and ask, 'How do we know there were gas chambers?'" Lipstadt says. "Not that they become deniers, but what happens is that in a subtle way, the attackers put history on the defensive." Denial slowly becomes just one more familiar and alternate way of thinking

about Jews and Nazis. In a talk-show culture, all talkers have equal status, flat-earthers and round-earthers, Holocaust deniers and Holocaust historians, people who speak regularly to interplanetary aliens and people who don't.

Holocaust denial is only the most spectacular example of a broader assault on knowledge, facts and memory that is sweeping through the culture. A lot of it comes from some disastrous intellectual trends on campus. Deconstruction and its allied movements say that knowledge is constructed, texts are biased. Values and truth are nothing more than arbitrary products of a particular group. History is not true, merely a story imposed by the powerful on the weak. (Time Warner managed to pick up this theme in a Warner Bros. Records ad celebrating Black History Month. "History is written by the winners," the ad said, quoting Alex Haley.)

At the extreme, some of these theories say there is no external reality at all, merely consciousness, and some say that personal experience or stories are the only source of truth. This is all intellectual junk, but it's having a profound effect in the real world. Everything is up for grabs now. Like the black veterans who challenged the false TV documentary, it's important for honest people to take a stand and not let lies slide by. Otherwise, reasoned discussion in America will descend further into a fact-free opinion fest. ■



A few preliminary remarks will serve, I hope, to place the present chapter in its context. By *sociology* I mean, more often than not, indeed almost always, that global science which Emile Durkheim and François Simiand intended right at the beginning of the century. Sociology is not yet that science, but it is constantly tending toward it, even if it is destined never fully to achieve it. By *history* I mean research conducted scientifically; at a pinch I might even call it a *science*, but a complex one: there is no *one* history, *one* profession of historian, but many professions, many kinds of history, a whole list of inquiries, points of view, possibilities, a list to which yet more lines of inquiry, points of view, possibilities will be added tomorrow. But in order to be understood by the sociologist—who, like philosophers, has a tendency to see history as a discipline whose rules have been defined utterly and once and for all—would I do better to say that there are as many debatable and debated ways of coming to grips with the past as there are attitudes to the present? And that history can even be considered as in some sense a study of the present?

This said, no one must expect to find here an answer, or indeed an attempt at an answer, to the usual questions on the relationship between history and sociology, or a sequel to the constantly recurring, constantly changing argument between these neighbors who seem able neither to ignore nor to understand each other, and who define themselves in their quarrels in an entirely one-sided way. There are false arguments, just as there are false problems. Anyway, there is hardly ever any real dialogue between sociologist and historian. When François Simiand quarrels with Charles Seignobos, he thinks he is speaking with history, whereas in fact he is speaking only with a certain kind of history, that which Henri Berr christened *l'histoire historisante* ("historicizing history").¹ When at about the same date he engages Henri Hauser, he is faced with doubtless the most brilliant historian of his generation, but too brilliant, too subtle a dialectician, entrenched behind early successes and the ancient rules of his profession. He should have addressed himself to Paul Lacombe in order to have had an adversary his own size. But then perhaps he might

Chapter 4 of the Introduction to the *Traité du sociologue*, published under the general editorship of Georges Gurvitch, 2 vols. (Paris: P.U.F., 1958-60).

have run the risk of finding himself in agreement with him, might he not?

Now, argument is possible only if the adversaries give themselves up to it, and are ready to "take up the sword,"² in the phrase an irritated and amused historian, none other than Paul Lacombe himself in fact, used long ago now, in 1900, in answering a critic. I imagine that in his passionate desire for a "scientific history," this devotee of history could easily have reached an understanding with the sociologist François Simiand. A little close reading would have sufficed. In his desire to free himself from the frustrations and insoluble difficulties of our profession, did not Paul Lacombe even go so far as to avoid time? "Time!" he wrote. "It is nothing in itself, objectively, it is only an idea we have."³ Unhappily, François Simiand dealt with Paul Lacombe's theories only in passing, and chose to charge against other, irreducible adversaries. In fact, there is always *a* history which can be in agreement with a sociology—or, obviously, which can on the other hand be made to collide with it. Georges Gurvitch,⁴ in his article on historicosociological debate, the most recent of its kind—at least, that I know of—cannot agree with Henri Marrou, but finds it much easier to agree with me. . . . If we look even more closely, perhaps we will find that between historian and sociologist there can never be either true agreement, or perfect accord.

1

A first, essential precaution: let us try and give a rapid picture of history, as it appears in its most recent definitions, for all sciences are constantly redefining and reexamining themselves. Each historian is necessarily aware of the changes which he himself must precipitate, however involuntarily, in a flexible profession which evolves of itself because of the weight of new knowledge, new aims, new enthusiasms, as well as because of the general development of the human sciences. All the social sciences infect each other, and history is just as much a prey to these epidemics as any of the others. Whence come its changes in function, or method, or appearance.

If we begin our retrospective with this century, we should have at least ten analyses at our disposal, and a thousand different visions of history, without counting the positions implicit in the works of historians themselves, who like to believe that their particular interpretations and points of view are better conveyed by their work than by being set forth in any precise and formal discussion (whence the amused reproach brought by philosophers that historians never quite know what sort of history it is they are writing).

At the beginning of the series, let us put the classic *Introduction aux études historiques* by Charles-Victor Langlois and Charles Seignobos,⁵ since everybody still does so. Beside this, let us call attention to the youthful article written by the young Paul Mantoux (1903).⁶ Then, much later, after Raymond Aron's classic *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire*,⁷ which represents a philosopher's vision of history, we come to *Métier d'historien* by Marc Bloch,⁸ an incomplete posthumous publication (doubtless fairly different from what its author would have finally produced, had he not died with such tragic suddenness). We arrive next at Lucien Febvre's scintillating *Combats pour l'histoire*, a collection of articles which he put together himself.⁹ Do not let us overlook, as we pass, Louis Halphen's brief essay,¹⁰ or Philippe Ariès's lively book,¹¹ or Éric Dardel's existentialist treatise,¹² or the articles of André Piganiol,¹³ nor Henri Marrou's interesting and subtle discussion,¹⁴ though this last is perhaps overly limited, for my taste, to the events of ancient history, and too deeply entrenched in the thinking of Max Weber, with the consequence that it is quite disproportionately obsessed with the problem of objectivity. This problem of objectivity and subjectivity in social questions fired the nineteenth century, the discoverer of the scientific method, but is it really of such prime importance today? In any case it is not our problem alone. There is a weakness in the scientific approach which can be overcome, as Henri Marrou so rightly says, only by redoubling our care and honesty. But please, do not exaggerate beyond all bounds the role of the Historian, even written with a capital H!

Though abridged, incomplete, and deliberately limited to citing only the French literature on the subject, this extremely short bibliography nonetheless makes it possible to take stock of the arguments that have been put forward: it follows them fairly closely. But on the other hand, the chosen books and articles are far from indicating the profound variety of contemporary history—and yet that is the most important thing of all. Unless I am much mistaken, the fundamental movement of history today is not one of choosing between this or that path, or different point of view, but of accepting and absorbing all the successive definitions in which, one after another, there have been attempts to confine it. For all the different kinds of history belong to us.

At the beginning of this century, people were only too happy to claim, following Michelet, that history consisted in the "resurrection of the past." A fine phrase, and a fine program! The "task of history is to commemorate the past, all of the past," wrote Paul Mantoux in 1908. Indeed: and what, in fact, was retained of this past? Our young historian answered readily, in 1903: "The particular, whatever occurs only once is the domain of history."¹⁵ It is the classic answer, the image of exclusion that philosophers and sociologists readily put forward, to the exclusion

of any other. When we were on a boat together on our way to Brazil in 1936, Émile Bréhier, the historian of philosophy, would not waver from this point of view during our friendly discussions on the subject. According to him, anything which recurred in the past belonged to the domain of sociology, to the neighboring concern. So the whole of the past did not belong to us. But let us not prolong the debate. Like any historian, I am attracted to the unique event, which blooms for but a single day and then fades, never again to be held between one's fingers. Moreover, I believe that in any society there must always be thousands upon thousands of such unique occurrences. And above all, I believe that if one should ever manage to grasp such a society in its entirety, it would be quite right to assert that it would never wholly be repeated: it consists of a provisional *balance*, original and unique unto itself.

So I would agree with Philippe Ariès for structuring his history on the basis of a recognition of the differences between periods and social realities. But history does not consist only in differences, in the unique and the novel—whatever will not happen twice. Besides, the novel is never entirely new. It goes hand in hand with the recurrent and the regular. Talking of the battle of Pavia (24 February 1525) and even more of Rocroi (19 May 1643), Paul Lacombe remarked that certain incidents in these battles "derived from a system of armaments, tactics, customs, and traditions of warfare which can also be found in a good many other battles of the age."¹⁶ In one way Pavia marks the beginning of modern warfare; it is an event, but an event occurring within the context of a whole family of other events. And really, how could one believe in a history confined exclusively to the unique occurrence? Quoting Paul Lacombe approvingly, François Simiand¹⁷ added on his own account the historian's assertion that "there is no fact in which one cannot discern one entirely individual aspect, and another deriving from its social context, one aspect a consequence of contingency, and another of recurring factors." Thus, from the very beginning of the century there has been a protest or at least some doubt about a history entirely confined to individual events, and because of this noteworthy fact, about this "linear," "contingent" history, *l'histoire événementielle*, the history of events, as Paul Lacombe was to end by calling it.

To transcend the event means transcending the short time span in which it is set, the time span of the chronicle, or of journalism—the brief moments of awareness whose traces give us such a vivid sense of the events and lives of the past. It means asking if over and above the passage of events, there is not an unconscious, or rather a more or less conscious, history which to a great extent escapes the awareness of the actors, whether victors or victims: they make history, but history bears them along.

This search for a history outside the confines of the event was imposed imperiously by contact with the other human sciences, an inevitable contact (as the running arguments will testify). In France it dates from as early as 1900, with Henri Berr's marvelous *Revue de synthèse historique* which is so moving to read in retrospect, followed in 1929 by the vigorous and most effective campaign carried out in Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch's *Annales*.

From that time on, history busied itself in dealing with recurrent events as well as individual occurrences, conscious and unconscious realities alike. From that time on, the historian has wanted to be, and has become, an economist, sociologist, anthropologist, demographer, psychologist, linguist. These new meetings of the mind were at the same time meetings of friends and of feelings. The friends of Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, the founders and the inspiration of *Annales*, made up a permanent colloquium on the human sciences, ranging from Albert Demangeon and Jules Sion, the geographers, to Maurice Halbwachs, the sociologist, Charles Blondel and Henri Wallon, the psychologists, and François Simiand, the philosopher-sociologist-economist. With their help, whether well or ill but certainly with determination, history laid hold of all the human sciences. Along with its guides, it wanted somehow to become an impossible universal science of man. In so doing it gave itself up to a kind of juvenile imperialism, but only for the same reasons and in the same way as nearly all the human sciences at that time, which, small nations though they truly were, all dreamed of devouring, overthrowing, dominating everything else in the field.

From that time on, history has gone on along the same lines, feeding off the other human sciences. The movement has not stopped, though it has changed, as one might have expected it would. There is a great distance¹⁸ between Marc Bloch's testament, *Métier d'historien*, and the postwar *Annales*, managed in fact under the sole direction of Lucien Febvre. All too little attentive to method and orientation, historians are hardly aware of this. Nevertheless, after 1945, the question posed itself afresh: what were the position and the usefulness of history? Was it, should it be, simply an exclusive study of the past? If, during the past years, it had thrown itself into tying together the whole bundle of the human sciences, would this not have inevitable consequences as far as its nature was concerned? Within its own sphere, it might be all the human sciences. But where does the past end?

Everything is history, they say jokingly. Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote only recently: "For everything is history, what was said yesterday is history, what was said a minute ago is history."¹⁹ I would amend this to whatever was said, thought, acted, or merely lived. But if history, omnipresent history, raises questions about society as a whole, it always does

so on the basis of that very movement of time which carries life ceaselessly along, and at the same time steals it away, extinguishing and rekindling its flames. History is a dialectic of the time span; through it, and thanks to it, history is a study of society, of the whole of society, and thus of the past, and thus equally of the present, past and present being inseparable. In a remark he repeated again and again during the last ten years of his life, Lucien Febvre put it this way: "History, science of the past, science of the present."

It will be understood that the author of this chapter, heir to the *Annales* of Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, feels himself in a particularly favored position to encounter, "sword in hand," the sociologist who would reproach him either with not thinking like him, or else with thinking too much like him. History seems to me to be a dimension of social science; they are both aspects of one and the same thing. In fact, time, the passage of time, history impose themselves, or should impose themselves on all the human sciences. Their tendency is not to oppose, but to coalesce.

II

I have already written,²⁰ partly contrary to Georges Gurvitch, that sociology and history made up one single intellectual adventure, not two different sides of the same cloth but the very stuff of that cloth itself, the entire substance of its yarn. Such an assertion is of course debatable, and could hardly be maintained to the letter. But it satisfies a desire, even an imperious desire I have for unification among the different human sciences, so that they might submit themselves less to a common market than to a common problematic. This would free them from a host of false problems and useless knowledge and after all the necessary pruning and rearrangement the way would be prepared for a new future divergence which would be both fertile and creative. For we need a new impetus for the human sciences.

It can hardly be denied that history and sociology come together, identify with each other, and merge often enough. The reasons are straightforward. On the one hand there is the inflated imperialism of history, on the other the similarity in their two natures: history and sociology alike are the only two *global* sciences, given to extending their inquiries into any aspect of social reality whatever. Insofar as it consists in all the human sciences in the vast domain of the past, history is a synthesizer, an orchestrator. And if the study of time *in all its manifestations* opens up for it, as I believe, all the doors to an understanding of the present, then it has got a finger in every pie on the table. And it finds itself regularly sharing the dish with sociology, which is also a synthesizer

by vocation, and which the dialectic of the time span forces to turn toward the past—whether it would or no.

Even if one should see sociology according to the old formula as the "science of those facts which taken together go to make up the collective life of man," even if one should regard it as the search for new structures arising amid all the heat and confusion of contemporary life—will not all of social life lie within the range of its inquiry and assessment? Collective life cannot be seen except by contrast with the life of the individual, or as an aspect of the life of an individual: it is a constantly recurring dichotomy. There is a renewal, but it can exist only in relation to what is old and is not always ready to be consumed within the fires of the present, which burn everything, new wood and old alike, the one as fast as the other.

So the sociologist should not feel himself a stranger around the workshops of history: he will find there his own materials, his own tools, his own vocabulary, his own problems, even his own uncertainties. Of course, the likeness is not total and is often misleading: there is the whole business of education, apprenticeship, career, inheritance, the feel of the profession, the different techniques of information demanded by a whole range of documentary sources (but this last is true even within history itself: the study of the Middle Ages and the study of the nineteenth century call for quite different attitudes to documents). History, one might say, is one of the least structured of the social sciences, and so one of the most flexible and open. The social sciences are perhaps present in us even more frequently than in sociology, even though its mission is to contain them all. There is an economic history whose richness must shame, I am sure, the poverty-stricken anemia of economic sociology. There is a wonderful geographic history and a vigorous historical geography which can hardly be compared with the *pointilliste* ecology of the sociologists. There is a demographic history (either it is history, or it does not exist) in the light of which social morphology seems a thing of straw. There is even a social history, which though mediocre would hardly find itself enriched through contact with the rather thin studies of typological sociology (to avoid the pleonastic social sociology). And it is more than likely that quantitative history, following the lines set out by Ernest Labrousse and his students (Rome Historical Congress, 1955) will prove decisively more advanced in the domain of the study of social classes than abstract sociology, which in my view is overly preoccupied with the concept of social classes propounded by Marx and his disciples.

But let us call a halt there. It would be too easy to make what sociologists are attempting and what we historians are engaged in seem to correspond, term for term. The sociology of knowledge and the his-

tory of ideas; microsociology and sociometry on the one hand, the history of surface happenings, so-called *histoire événementielle*, on the other, that microhistory which juxtaposes the most casual news item and the most shattering, explosive sociodrama affecting a nation or a whole world. . . . There even comes a point when I cannot draw any clear distinction between such immediate activities as the sociology of art and the history of art, the sociology of work and the history of work, literary sociology and literary history, or between religious history at Henri Bremond's level and religious sociology on the exceptionally brilliant level of Gabriel Le Bras and his followers. And where differences exist, could they not be overcome by an alignment of the less brilliant partner with the more brilliant? In this way the historian can be seen as not being sufficiently attentive to social signs and symbols, to constant underlying social functions. But numerous examples demonstrate that it would not take much to enable the historian to bring these problems within the range of his own particular locus. It is a question of displacements and oversights, not of professional imperatives and exclusions.

There is another sign of this brotherly correspondance: the vocabulary tends to be the same between one science and the next. The historians' term for "structural crisis" is *crise structurale*, while economists speak of a *crise structurelle*, and Lévi-Strauss has returned to *structurale* in his latest book, *Structural Anthropology*.²¹ Similarly, should we say *conjunctural*, which sounds awkward, or *conjoncturel*? And *événementiel*, which was coined by Paul Lacombe (though he hesitated, as I have said, between *éventuel* and *événementiel*) and was taken up by François Simiand, was bounced back to the historians ten years ago, whereupon it took up a common orbit. The word *level* ("palier") emerged from Georges Gurvitch's thinking and for better or worse we are getting used to it. We say that there are not only levels of historical reality, but also levels of historical explanation, and thence possible levels of historicosociological understanding or conflict: one can move from conflict into agreement, just by making a change of levels.

But enough of this game, which would be only too easy to continue. It would be far better now to show where its interest lies. The vocabulary is the same, or is becoming the same, because the problematic is becoming increasingly the same, under the convenient heading of the currently dominant two words *model* and *structure*. The model has made its appearance within the living waters of history as a "workman's tool," but in the service of the most ambitious undertakings. Structure, or structures, beset us everywhere: we hear only too much of them, even, as Lucien Febvre observed in one of his last writings, in *Annales*.²² In fact, whatever the cost, social science must construct a model, a general and particular explanation of social life, and substitute for a disconcerting empirical

reality a clearer image, and one more susceptible to scientific application. We have to choose, cut short, reconstitute, measure, accept, and indeed almost deliberately seek out contradictions. Does social life in fact possess this multileveled structure, is it "laminated," to take up Dr. Roumeguère's term,²³ or not? Does reality change with every stage or level? If it does, then it is "vertically" discontinuous. Is it structured throughout, or is only a certain stratum structured? Outside the rigid envelope of structures, are there free, unorganized zones of reality? The structured and the unstructured, the flesh and bones of social reality. But is the movement which carries society along structured too, according to the plan of a, so to speak, "dynamic" structure? Or, if you prefer, is there any regularity, any phases which necessarily recur in all phenomena of historical evolution? The "movement of history" would not be going blindly on.

In fact, these problems meet and overlap, or should meet and mesh. By a seeming paradox the historian here appears more of a simplifier than the sociologist. In the final analysis, it is all very well for him to claim that the present too falls within his sphere when, for a thousand reasons that need no elaboration, he continues to study it less well and less often than the simplified and decanted society of the past. The present, by contrast, is a recall to the multiple, the complex, the "multidimensional." Perhaps the historian hears and perceives the call less well than the sociologist, the observer of contemporary ferment?

III

Considering the overall view like this, one tends to get a fairly strong impression of analogy and identity. The two professions, taken in their entirety, have the same boundaries, the same circumference. It hardly matters that the historical sector should be better worked in ours, the sociological in theirs: a little care, a little more work, and our domains would be more like each other, and with little difficulty would be able to share the same achievements.

This analogy would be put in question only should the sociologist not wish the historian to trespass into the present, if then. But would it really be possible, in that case, to turn all our oppositions into a dubious contrast between today and yesterday? Of the two neighbors, one delves into the past, which after all is not strictly speaking his domain, and does so in the name, so to speak, of repetition; the other neighbor makes forays into the present, in the name of a time span creator of construction and destruction, of permanence also. On the one hand repetition and comparison, on the other, duration and dynamism, two ways of coming to grips with reality, both tools each one can use. What clear boundary is

there between what has been lived and what is being or will be lived? The early sociologists knew very well that the present made up only part of their construct. Which means, said François Simiand, that we must "seek for facts and cases in the narrative of the past of humankind."²⁴

I believe even less in any real opposition of styles. Can history be seen as more continuous, sociology more discontinuous? Such a position has been maintained, but how badly the question is put! In order to get any clear notion, we would have to confront the works themselves, and see whether such oppositions were internal or external to our respective professions. Nor must we forget that discontinuity, today, is only just moving into historical thought. When Marc Bloch posed the problem prematurely, just before the Second World War, all he did was to unleash one of the vainest debates that historians ever undertook.

In fact, each historian and each sociologist has his own style. Georges Gurvitch is almost excessive and overscrupulous in his desire for a complex, hyperempirical sociology, in the image of what he not unreasonably sees as an abundant reality. Claude Lévi-Strauss cuts through this abundance and destroys it in order to bring to light the deep-seated, slender line of human continuity. Does one really absolutely have to choose and decide which one of them is *the* sociologist? I say again, it is a question of style and of temperament. Lucien Febvre too was aware of an abundant reality, full of incidents, and his style was a sort of dialogue which lent itself at pleasure, more and better than any other, to tracing these complicated designs. Fustel had a different kind of simplicity, with his anxiety to trace a line through events with a single sweep of the hand. Michelet exploded into a variety of lines. Pirenne, Marc Bloch were a good deal more continuous than Lucien Febvre. But do they not owe this as much to the nature of what they were contemplating as to their own temperaments? They beheld in the West a Middle Ages shorn of documents. The fifteenth century, and still more the sixteenth, contain a thousand voices which cannot make themselves heard earlier. The great dialogues of the present age have their beginnings then. In short, for me there does not seem to be any single style of history, to which it must remain bound. Any more than there is a single style of sociology. Durkheim has an authoritarian, linear simplicity. Halbwachs, too, classing things once and for all. Marcel Mauss is more various, but we hardly read him anymore—and with good reason: we hear his thought echoed by his disciples, and thus joining still-living in the line of contemporary research.

To sum up, the differences we seek in our joint ownership are not of the order of such easy formulas and distinctions. The debate must be carried right into the heart of history (or rather, our inquiry must be carried, for we do not wish to reanimate a debate). We must look first at

all the levels of knowledge and historical work—then, along the line of the time span, the times and temporalities of history.

IV

History exists at different levels, I would even go so far as to say three levels but that would be only in a manner of speaking, and simplifying things too much. There are ten, a hundred levels to be examined, ten, a hundred different time spans. On the surface, the history of events works itself out in the short term: it is a sort of microhistory. Halfway down, a history of conjunctures follows a broader, slower rhythm. So far that has above all been studied in its developments on the material plane, in economic cycles and intercycles. (The masterpiece of this sort of history is Ernest Labrousse's book²⁵ on the crisis, in fact half an intercycle [1774–91], which formed the launching pad for the French Revolution.) And over and above the "recitatif" of the conjuncture, structural history, or the history of the *longue durée*, inquires into whole centuries at a time. It functions along the border between the moving and the immobile, and because of the long-standing stability of its values, it appears unchanging compared with all the histories which flow and work themselves out more swiftly, and which in the final analysis gravitate around it.

To sum up, there are three series of historical levels, with which sociology unfortunately is not yet in touch. Now, the dialogue with history at these different levels could hardly proceed at the same pace, or at least with the same animation. There surely must be a sociology of history and of historical knowledge for each of these three levels, but they are still waiting to be constructed. We historians can only imagine what they might be like.

A sociology of the history of events would consist in a study of those constant, immediate, nervous mechanisms which record, day by day, the so-called history of the world as it is being made. It is a partially misleading kind of history, in which events cling to each other, affecting each other, and in which great men appear regularly organizing things, like conductors organizing their orchestras. This sociology of the history of events would also take up the old dialogue (between the unique and the recurring). It would, equally, consist in a confrontation between traditional history on the one hand, and microsociology and sociometry on the other. Are these latter two, as I think they are, richer than superficial history, and if so, why? How can one determine the place of this large expanse of history in all the complexity of a society in the grip of time? Unless I am much mistaken, all these questions go further than the old misunderstandings. The incident (if not the event, the socio-

drama) exists in repetition, regularity, multitude, and there is no way of saying absolutely whether its level is quite without fertility or scientific value. It must be given closer examination.

If our sociological imagination is working overtime with regard to the event, on the other hand everything remains to be constructed, I was about to say invented, where the *conjuncture*, figure almost entirely overlooked by sociology, is concerned. Is it or is it not sufficiently powerful to have any deep effect on relations, to favor or militate against collective bonds, tightening some, straining and breaking others? François Simiand has only sketched out a possible sociology of conjunctural time according to the expansion and contraction of material conditions. Would an expansion (phase A) and the freedom which it offers, at least in certain sectors, maintain the social relationships and structures, or not? With the contraction of each phase B, material life (and, of course, not only that) would realign itself and seek other balances, inventing them, mobilizing the forces of ingenuity, or at least allowing them full play. . . . But in these areas the research done by historians and economists has not yet built up a sufficient number of working hypotheses or sketched out sufficient viable frameworks to make it possible to resume or extend François Simiand's sketch. Besides, the history of the conjuncture would be complete only if in addition to the economic conjuncture one could have a study of the social conjuncture and all the other concomitant situations of the expansion or contraction. It is the weaving together of a variety of simultaneous conjunctures which would bring about a viable sociology.

As far as the history of the *longue durée* is concerned, history and sociology can hardly be said to meet, or even to rub shoulders. This would be saying too little. What they do is mingle. The *longue durée* is the endless, inexhaustible history of structures and groups of structures. For the historian a structure is not just a thing built, put together; it also means permanence, sometimes for more than centuries (time too is a structure). This great structure travels through vast tracts of time without changing; if it deteriorates during the long journey, it simply restores itself as it goes along and regains its health, and in the final analysis its characteristics alter only very slowly.

I have attempted to show,²⁶ I would hardly dare say to demonstrate, that all Claude Lévi-Strauss's new research—communications theory and social mathematics together—succeeds only when he launches his models onto the waters of the *longue durée*. Whatever the starting point he has chosen for his journey—be it microsociology or some other level—it is only when he has reached this ground floor of time, which is still half caught in sleep, that the structure becomes clear: primitive relations of

kinship, myth, ceremonial, and institutions stand out from the slowest of history's notions. It is the vogue among physicists to speak of weightlessness. A structure is a body removed from gravity, removed from the acceleration of history.

But a historian faithful to the teachings of Lucien Febvre and Marcel Mauss will always wish to grasp the whole, the totality of social life. So he is led to bringing together different levels, time spans, different kinds of time, structures, conjunctures, events. These taken all together go to make up for him a fairly precarious global balance which can be maintained only through a constant series of adjustments, clashes, and slight alterations. In its totality, social reality in flux is ideally, at every instant, *synchronous* with its history, a constantly changing image, although it might repeat a thousand previous details of a thousand previous realities. Who would deny it? That is why the idea of a global structure for society disturbs and embarrasses the historian, even though there must be, of course, a considerable gap between a global structure and a global reality. What the historian would like to rescue from the debate is the uncertainty of the mass movement, its various possibilities for alteration, its freedoms, its particular "functional" explanations, offspring of the moment and the particular. At this stage of "totality"—I hardly like to say "totalization"—in short, at the very moment of uttering the last word, the historian will always revert to the antisociological positions of his teachers. Any society, too, must be unique, even if many of its materials are old. In this way, though it can doubtless be explained outside its own time, yet it can also be explained in the context of its own time. It is indeed a "child of its time," the great expanse of time surrounding it, in the very spirit of Henri Hauser and Lucien Febvre. Each society is a function of that time, and not exclusively of the time spans which it holds in common with other social realities.

V

Have I let myself fall prey to facile illusions? I have shown the historian's profession overstepping its ancient limits, questioning the very basis of social science, or very nearly doing so, and allowing its curiosity free rein in all directions. At the beginning of the century, it turned toward psychology: that was the age during which Werner Sombart claimed that capitalism is primarily a spirit. (Much later, though still along the same lines, Lucien Febvre would speak of mental equipment.) Then, in the thirties, it turned toward the conjunctural political economy which François Simiand revealed to French historians. And for a very long time it has been turned toward geography. It is noticeable how little Marxism has beset our profession in the present century. But its infiltration, its

temptations, its influences have nevertheless been many and marked: the only thing lacking in this first half of the twentieth century has been a masterpiece of Marxist history to serve as a model and a rallying point. It is still awaited. Nonetheless this enormous influence has played its part among the numerous changes which have taken place in our profession and have forced the historian to break old habits and acquire new ones, to make his way out from the legacy of his apprenticeship and even of his own personal achievements.

All the same, there is an unavoidable, hidden limit to all these migrations and metamorphoses.²⁷ In truth, the historian can never get away from the question of time in history: time sticks to his thinking like soil to a gardener's spade. He may well dream of getting away from it, of course. Spurred on by the anguish of 1940, Gaston Roupnel²⁸ wrote words on this subject that will make any true historian suffer. Similar is the classic remark made by Paul Lacombe who was also a historian of the grand school: "Time is nothing in itself, objectively, it is only an idea we have."²⁹ But do these remarks really provide a way out? I myself, during a rather gloomy captivity, struggled a good deal to get away from a chronicle of those difficult years (1940-45). Rejecting events and the time in which events take place was a way of placing oneself to one side, sheltered, so as to get some sort of perspective, to be able to evaluate them better, and not wholly to believe in them. To go from the short time span, to one less short, and then to the long view (which, if it exists, must surely be the wise man's time span); and having got there, to think about everything afresh and to reconstruct everything around one: a historian could hardly not be tempted by such a prospect.

But these successive flights cannot put the historian definitively beyond the bounds of the world's time, beyond historical time, so imperious because it is irreversible, and because it flows at the very rhythm of the earth's rotation. In fact, these different time spans which we can discern are all interdependent: it is not so much time which is the creation of our own minds, as the way in which we break it up. These fragments are reunited at the end of all our labors. The *longue durée*, the conjuncture, the event all fit into each other neatly and without difficulty, for they are all measured on the same scale. Equally, to be able to achieve an imaginative understanding of one of these time spans is to be able to understand them all. The philosopher, taken up with the subjective aspect of things, interior to any notion of time, never senses this weight of historical time, of a concrete, universal time, such as the time of conjuncture that Ernest Labrousse depicts at the beginning of his book like a traveler who is constantly the same and who travels the world imposing the same set of values, no matter the country in which he has disembarked, nor what the social order with which it is invested.

For the historian everything begins and ends with time, a mathematical, godlike time, a notion easily mocked, time external to men, "exogenous," as economists would say, pushing men, forcing them, and painting their own individual times the same color: it is, indeed, the imperious time of the world.

Sociologists, of course, will not entertain this oversimplified notion. They are much closer to the *dialectique de la durée* as put forward by Gaston Bachelard.³⁰ Social time is but one dimension of the social reality under consideration. It is within this reality just as it is within a given individual, one sign of particularity among others. The sociologist is in no way hampered by this accommodating sort of time, which can be cut, frozen, set in motion entirely at will. Historical time, I must repeat, lends itself less easily to the supple double action of synchrony and diachrony: it cannot envisage life as a mechanism that can be stopped at leisure in order to reveal a frozen image.

This is a more profound rift than is at first apparent: sociologists' time cannot be ours. The fundamental structure of our profession revolts against it. Our time, like economists' time, is one of measure. When a sociologist tells us that a structure breaks down only in order to build itself up afresh, we are happy to accept an explanation which historical observation would confirm anyway. But we would wish to know the precise time span of these movements, whether positive or negative, situated along the usual axis. An economic cycle, the ebb and flow of material life, can be measured. A structural social crisis should be equally possible to locate in time, and through it. We should be able to place it exactly, both in itself and even more in relation to the movement of associated structures. What is profoundly interesting to the historian is the way these movements cross one another, and how they interact, and how they break up: all things which can be recorded only in relation to the uniform time of historians, which can stand as a general measure of all these phenomena, and not in relation to the multiform time of social reality, which can stand only as the individual measure of each of these phenomena separately.

Rightly or wrongly, the historian cannot but formulate such opposed ideas, even when entering into the welcoming, almost brotherly realm of Georges Gurvitch's sociology. Did not a philosopher³¹ define him recently as the one "who is driving sociology back into the arms of history"? But even with him, the historian can recognize neither his time spans nor his temporalities. The great social edifice (should one say *model*?) erected by Georges Gurvitch is organized according to five basic architectural aspects:³² The deeper levels; the level of sociability; the level of social groups; the level of global societies; and the level of time.

This final bit of scaffolding, temporalities, the newest and the most recently built, is as if superimposed on the whole.

Georges Gurvitch's temporalities are various. He distinguishes a whole series of them: the time of the *longue durée* and slow motion, time the deceiver and time the surpriser, time with an irregular beat, cyclic time running in place, time running slow, time alternating between running slow and fast, time running fast, explosive time. How could a historian believe in all this? Given such a range of colors, he could never reconstitute a single, white light—and that is something he cannot do without. The historian quickly becomes aware, too, that this chameleon-like time barely adds any extra touch, any spot of color to the categories which had been established earlier. In the city that our friend has built, time, the last to arrive, cohabits quite naturally with all the other categories. It fits itself to the dimensions of their homes and their demands, according to the "levels," sociabilities, groups, and global societies. It is a different way of rewriting the same equations without actually changing them. Each social reality secretes its own particular time, or time scale, like common snails. But what do we historians get out of all this? The vast edifice of this ideal city remains static. History is nowhere to be seen. The world's time, historical time is there, but imprisoned, like Aeolus in his goat's skin. It is not history which sociologists, fundamentally and quite unconsciously, bear a grudge against, but historical time—which is a reality that retains its violence no matter how one tries to bring it to order and to break it down. It is a constraint from which the historian is never free, while sociologists on the other hand almost always seem to manage to avoid it, by concentrating either on the instant, which is always present as if suspended somewhere above time, or else on repeated phenomena which do not belong to any age. So they escape the two contradictory movements of the mind, confining them within either the narrowest limits of the event or the most extended *longue durée*. Is such an evasion justifiable? That is the crux of the debate between historians and sociologists, and even between historians of differing persuasions.

VI

I do not believe it is possible to avoid history. Sociologists must take care. Philosophy (whence sociology comes and where it remains) prepares them only too well not to feel this concrete need for history. The techniques of inquiry into the present threaten only to complete the separation. All these investigators of the living moment, which hurries along and has a tendency to knock over anyone trying to handle it, would do well to beware of a too hasty observation, going only skin deep. A sociology of events clutters up our libraries, the files of

governments and businesses. Far be it from me to revolt against the fashion or to declare it useless. But whatever can its scientific value be, if it does not record the direction, the speed or slowness, the ascent or descent of the movement which carries along any social phenomenon, and if it does not attach itself to the movement of history, to the resounding dialectic which runs from the past to the present, and even to the future?

I wish that during their years of apprenticeship young sociologists would take the necessary time to study, even in the most modest of archives, the simplest of historical questions, so that they might at least once have contact outside the sterility of the textbooks with what is essentially a simple profession, but one which can be understood only by practicing it—like any other profession, I have no doubt. There can be no social science, in my meaning of the word, except in a reconciliation and the simultaneous application of our various professions. Setting them up one against the other is easy enough, but it is a quarrel which is danced to a pretty old tune. What we need now are new tunes.

Notes

1. The famous controversy did nonetheless also arise over a book of Paul Lacombe's, *De l'Histoire considérée comme science* (Paris, 1894). François Simiand's article "Méthode historique et science sociale," *Revue de synthèse historique* (1903): 1-22 and 129-57, is, in fact, subtitled "Étude de critique d'après les ouvrages récents de M. Lacombe et de M. Seignobos." But Paul Lacombe's work is hardly touched on.

2. Xénopol, in *Revue de synthèse historique*, no. 2 (1900), p. 135.

3. "La Science de l'histoire d'après M. Xénopol," *Revue de synthèse historique* (1900), p. 32.

4. "Continuité et discontinuité en histoire et en sociologie," *Annales E.S.C.*, (1957), pp. 73-84.

5. And let us add, Charles Seignobos, *La Méthode historique appliquée aux sciences sociales* (Paris, 1901).

6. "Histoire et sociologie," *Revue de synthèse historique* (1903), pp. 121-40.

7. 2d ed. (Paris, 1948; first edition published 1938).

8. *Apologie pour l'histoire ou métier d'historien* (Paris, 1949). See J. Stengers's perceptive note on this fine book, "Marc Bloch et l'histoire," *Annales E.S.C.* (1953), pp. 329-37.

9. Paris, 1953.

10. *Introduction à l'histoire* (Paris, 1946).

11. *Le Temps de l'histoire* (Paris, 1954).

12. *Histoire: Science du concret* (Paris, 1946).

13. "Qu'est-ce que l'histoire?" *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* (1955): 225-47.

14. *De la Connaissance historique*, 1954. To be completed by the two excellent bulletins on historiography put out by H.-J. Marrou, *Revue historique* (1953), pp. 256-70, and *ibid.* (1957), pp. 270-89.

15. Mantonx, "Histoire et sociologie," p. 122.

16. See above, note 3.

17. Simiand, "Méthode historique," p. 18.

18. See how wise, and how from another age, appears Jean Meuvret's article "Histoire et sociologie," *Revue historique* (1938).

19. *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest (London: Schoepf, 1968), p. 12.

20. *Annales E.S.C.* (1957), p. 73.

21. *Op cit.*

22. "And then, what about 'structures'? A highly fashionable word, I know; it can even sometimes be found in *Annales*, rather too often for my taste" (Preface to Huguette and Pierre Chaunu, *Séville et l'Atlantique* [Paris, 1959], vol. 1, p. xi).

23. Colloquium of the École des Hautes Études, 6th section, on structures, typed summary, 1958.

24. Simiand, "Méthode historique," p. 2.

25. *La Crise de l'économie française à la veille de la Révolution* (Paris, 1944).

26. F. Braudel, "Histoire et sciences sociales: La longue durée," *Annales E.S.C.*, no. 4 (1958). See above, p. 25.

27. The reader will notice that the following 3 pages reproduce a passage of the article on the *longue durée* (see above, p. 47), published in *Annales* in the same year. It was felt that taking the passage out of either article would disrupt the unity of the reasoning.

28. *Histoire et distîn* (Paris, 1943), *passim*.

29. See above, note 3.

30. *Dialectique de la durée*, 2d ed. (1950).

31. Gilles Granger, "Événement et structure dans les sciences de l'homme," *Cahiers de l'Institut de Science économique appliquée*, Série M, no. 1, pp. 41-42.

32. Georges Gurvitch, *Déterminismes sociaux et liberté humaine* (Paris, 1955), pp. 38-40 and *passim*.

Select Bibliography

1. Even more than the books which I have quoted in this article as illustrating the conflict between history and sociology, I would recommend young sociologists to read certain works which could put them directly in touch with history, and, more particularly, with that form of history most closely kin to their own profession.

The titles listed below are only one possible selection out of innumerable others which could be made according to the varying tastes and curiosity of the individual.

Vidal de la Blache, P. *La France: Tableau géographique*. Paris, 1906.

Bloch, M. *Les Caractères originoux de l'histoire rurale française*. Paris-Oslo, 1931.

———. *La Société féodale*. Paris, 1940.

- Febvre, L. *Rabelais et les problèmes de l'incroyance au XVI^e siècle*. Paris, 1943.
- Dupront, A. *Le Mythe de croisade: Étude de sociologie religieuse*. Paris, 1956.
- Francastel, P. *Peinture et société*. Lyons, 1941.
- Braudel, F. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds. 2 vols. N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1972-74.
- Curtius, E. *Le Moyen âge latin*. Paris, 1956.
- Huizinga, J. *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, trans. F. Hopman. England, 1924.
- Labrousse, E. *La Crise de l'économie française à la veille de la Révolution*. Paris, 1944.
- Lefebvre, G. *La Grande Peur*. Paris, 1932.
2. Methodological studies of history are legion, so let us confine ourselves to listing some of those quoted in the preceding article:
- Ariès, P. *Le Temps de l'histoire*. Paris, 1954.
- Bloch, M. *Métier d'historien*. Paris, 1949.
- Braudel, F. "Histoire et sciences sociales: La longue durée," *Annales E.S.C.* no. 4 (1958).
- Febvre, L. *Combats pour l'histoire*. Paris, 1954.
- Piganiol, A. "Qu'est-ce que l'histoire?" in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* (1955): 225-47.
- Marrou, H.-J. *De la Connaissance historique*. Paris, 1954.
- Simiand, F. "Méthode historique et sciences sociale," *Revue de synthèse historique* (1903): 1-22; 129-57.

Toward a Historical Economics

Are the achievements of economic history already sufficiently substantial for one to be able usefully to transcend them, at least in thought, and to try and distinguish general rules and tendencies over and above individual cases? In other words, could the outline of a historical economics which would pay attention to great units, to the general and the permanent, be of use to economic research, to the solution of present large-scale problems or, which is more to the point, to the formulation of such problems? Physicists from time to time run into difficulties to which only a mathematician, with his particular rules, can find the answer. Could we as historians provide a similar service for our economist colleagues? No doubt the comparison is too flattering. I have an idea that if one wanted a more modest and perhaps more accurate comparison, one could compare us as historians to those travelers who make a note of all the features of the way, the colors of the landscape, and are led by the similarities and parallels to discuss their theories with geographical friends. And in fact, during the course of our journeys through the time of men we do get the feeling of having distinguished economic realities, some stable, others fluctuating, some rhythmical, others not. . . Are these illusions, useless reconnaissance, or rather work which can already prove worthwhile? It is not something that we alone can judge.

So I believe that a dialogue could and should be initiated between the different human sciences, sociology, history, and economics. Upeavals could follow for all of them. I am ready in advance to accept these upheavals as far as history is concerned, and for this reason it is not a method that I wish or am capable of defining in the few lines which I have agreed, though not without a certain trepidation, to offer to the *Revue économique*. At the very most I would like to point out a few questions which I would like to see considered by economists, so that they might then be offered back to history transformed, clarified, enlarged, or perhaps on the contrary reduced to nothing. But even then there would have been progress, we should have gone a step forward. It goes without saying that I do not claim to pose all the problems or even all the most important problems which would benefit from being confronted with both methods, the historical and the economic. There must be

On a Concept of Social History

I am late in discussing Otto Brunner's complicated, alert, and ambiguous book: *Neue Wege der Sozialgeschichte*,¹ which was published in 1956 but has only just reached *Annales* (after a series of rather fortuitous misadventures). Historians who are readers of general reviews will at any rate be familiar with two of the ten articles brought together in this volume, having read and appreciated them when they first appeared: one, on the very problem of any sort of European social history, was published in the *Historische Zeitschrift*² in 1954, and the other in the *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* in the same year (on the bourgeoisie in Europe and Russia).³ By themselves, they already posed certain problems which this book takes up again, vast and fairly complex problems which finish by calling the entire methodology and even the very meaning of the historical sciences into question. One must say that it will not be easy to give an exact summary of this book which, despite its fundamental unity, is made up of different materials, of a series of separate studies, nine, or even ten of them, since chapter 6 is itself composed of two studies on the relationships between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy in Vienna and Lower Austria (during the Middle Ages). Picture to yourself journeys offering successive points of view, the succession of which, by its very speed, does not appear to have any real logic until one has had time to think about it. Nor, unfortunately, is one's reading made any easier by the numerous references placed at the very back of the volume: you refer to the note, lose your place, and have to start all over again. It is true, however, that all this coming and going is accompanied by great delight.

Otto Brunner owes nothing to *Annales*, and the assumptions of his reasoning or his experience, his proofs, and his conclusion are not ours. This is what gives them their unique importance for us. But it entails a great effort on our part to understand and, here and there, to grasp fully and penetrate the subtleties of his language. Here in any case is a historian who speaks aloud of the present disruption of history, and strong in the power of his profession and in the help of neighboring sciences, attempts to dominate the disturbed times with which we are confronted. As he has need to rely on his peers, an almost complete

Annales E.S.G., no. 2 (April-June 1959), Débats et combats, pp. 308-49.

procession of German historians forms around him almost from the start, historians both of yesterday and of today. Even if Otto Brunner does not have their complete assent—and that is more than likely—he presents himself in their company, and that is an added attraction of his book. We can find here some of our old reading companions: Werner Sombart, Max Weber, Georg von Bulow who only yesterday counted the young Marc Bloch among his listeners, Meinecke whose thought has remained unjustly foreign, or at least substantially so, to our own historiography, Heinrich Mitteis, author of some splendid works on medieval institutions, Otto Hintze who would be granted the major position he deserves among us had his complete works not been published during the most inauspicious years of 1941 and 1942, Thomas Mayer, and many others. Not less numerous in these notes and references are the names of the new specialists in the history of philosophy, of sociologists, of economists and, finally, of historians: Gerhard Ritter, Werner Conze, Wilhelm Abel, Herbert Hassinger.⁴

Otto Brunner thus lays open to us with liberality, I was going to say in addition, a journey through the old and new highways of German historiography. But that makes it only the more difficult, in the end, to distinguish the true aspect of this nimble, enthusiastic thinker who fears neither contradiction nor an unfinished argument. It is true that the reader gradually grows accustomed to his procedure, to his feints, his enormous abridgments, and his frequently excellent explanations. As a medievalist our author finds himself placed at just the right juncture, at that of the destiny of the West. But the opportunity is always too good for him to be able to resist going beyond the conventional limits of the European Middle Ages, be it toward antiquity, or toward full modernity. "From Plato," he writes, "to Joachim of Floris and Bossuet," or equally, "From Homer to Fénelon." But do we at *Annales* have any right to complain of these great strides and not to be indulgent with regard to a historian who speaks of Europe without lingering over events ("the skeleton of history," as one of our shortsighted pedagogues once said), without lingering over individuals, or at least presenting them in serried ranks, in groups, as delegates of social or cultural wholes? We follow him, of course. But, let us reiterate, nothing in all this ensures that once one emerges from the essays, which one has to read and reread one by one, one can really come to grips at the end of the day with Otto Brunner's true thought, confronting problems which are not precisely our own, the prey of memories and experiences which we have not shared. I am not, however, so indifferent a reader that I did not pause once or twice over some reflection or other which, if prolonged, would have led us straight to the present. But I think it is futile to dwell on this sort of interpretation, difficult as it is, and mistaken as it well may be. Futile too

to refer, in order to make things out more clearly (except for such reference as I shall cite later on) to the dense, solid body of work of our author. I propose to examine only this single, intelligent, subtle book, which has come rather tardily to call upon us, and to see what it has to bring exclusively on the level of scientific speculation.

Western Originality (11th to 18th Century) Reduced to a "Model"

If I am not mistaken his first aim is to suggest to us, and to have us accept, a structural and conservative social history as opposed to a liberal, flexible, evolutionist sort of history. In practical terms we are offered a certain *particularized model* of *European social history* in the waters of the *longue durée*, from the eleventh to the eighteenth century. This model brings out the continuities, the immobilities, the structures. It abandons the event, underestimates the conjuncture, prefers the qualitative to the quantitative, and unfortunately is not for a moment interested in Ernest Labrousse's mathematical approach. The undertaking (confined to the medieval context) fits nonetheless quite easily into a social history as I conceive it and which has all the characteristics and dimensions of a global history.

The substantives and adjectives by which I thus attempt to circumscribe Otto Brunner's thought clearly only half define it, and may even to some extent distort it. Only the words I have italicized in the preceding paragraph can be found in Brunner's argument in the sense in which we commonly use them. In actual fact it is clearly a question, if I may return to the phrase for a moment, of a social *model*. But other continuities get added to the argument as it proceeds. Otto Brunner is happy to point out obvious continuities of ideas. His book is interlaced with their lines, constantly cutting across time. He also takes great delight in seeking out whatever the most original aspect of the present could contain of the distant past. Thus he sees the very old medieval concept of soul and body (though not in the sense of living organism which biology was later to give it) as being at the heart of the thought and vocabulary of Oswald Spengler, or suspects the physiocrats or even Karl Marx himself of taking up on their own account some idea or other from old medieval "oeconomia."

But it is above all society which is the object here of serious "modeling," in the specific field of the West between the eleventh and the eighteenth century. Apart from some dead ends here, some stagnations there, or particular exceptions elsewhere which must necessarily prove anomalous, Western society presents the same sort of framework, the same ruling factors everywhere: specifically the town with its bourgeoisie, its craftsmen, and its charters; the countryside with its en-

trenched peasantry (there were obviously the other sort too, fired by adventure, but they do nothing to hinder the existence of the former, strong in their rights) and their lords, both groups more preoccupied with the household than with profit and loss and economics, in the sense with which our modern society invests it. For economics began as, and was for many centuries, economy, care and consideration of the house (the "Rustic House," as Charles Estienne and Jean Liébaut called it, even as late as the sixteenth century): taking care of the servants or slaves, educating the children, deciding what should be cultivated, and in general being little bothered by the urban market and its "chrematistic" concerns. The old books on *oeconomia* may not overlook the market completely, but it is not at the heart of the subsistence economy which they describe. Their horizon is the "house," the "whole house." So we need not be surprised that they should include moral homilies, a summary of practical medicine, and sometimes even a collection of recipes. German historians and economists have long noted the riches of this *Hausvaterliteratur*.⁵

Within the model, these ruling components have their own autonomy, their own color, their individual meaning. But they work harmoniously together. They are crystals with clear-cut facets, through which passes a common light.

The different compartments communicate with each other: the peasant goes to town (with their fragile populations, the cities, even the stable ones, have a constant need for men). Here is a newcomer; later his son may become a craftsman; then one day the craftsman may become a merchant, the merchant a lord. For anything can and does happen: it is only a question of patience, of the care of generations, of a lucky chance. Son of peasants and himself a country weaver, Hans Fugger, the founder of the great family, arrived in Augsburg in 1367. Sometimes, on the contrary, the lords wish to become bourgeois. One cannot claim that such links were common, but such as they were they served to relax and break down certain tensions, and to maintain a long-standing balance. Yet it is a balance which is constantly threatened. If the exchanges accelerate, the initial crystals may in the end become altered. This is what is suggested by the example of Vienna (chap. 6), to which Otto Brunner devotes what are in my opinion the best pages of his book. It is true that the case is in fact a marginal one, that the "model" does not float too easily on these particular waters, that here the prince intervenes early in the dynamic processes of exchange. He facilitates the passages of the bourgeoisie into a nobility which bit by bit loses its virtue, its roots, and its territorial reality. In Austria and elsewhere, the state could perhaps be said to turn its own wheel in the millrace of these social ascents. And while during the Middle Ages in the West, the political organization merged into the

social organization and was indistinguishable from it (the lord being both lord and landowner), gradually, with the growth of the modern state, the distinction, the division is made: state on one side, economic society on the other. And the old model or, if you prefer, the *ancien régime*, breaks down. For whoever is determined to pinpoint this breakdown chronologically, the night of 4 August 1789 offers a pretty spectacular watershed. In one night feudal rights, village communities, urban charters, were all abolished. This of course is only a manner of speech; but all the same, suddenly the French Revolution appears as the culprit. And next to it in the dock, so to speak, shading into it but not to be substituted for it, stands that other gloomy figure, the Industrial Revolution.

That in any case was the end of one of the great phases of Western history, whose beginnings had their origins seven centuries earlier, between 1000 and 1100. During that far-off time, the West underwent an increase in strength and a long-drawn-out demographic increase (which soon set off colonization east of the Elbe and a sizeable emigration from France toward the Iberian peninsula). Henri Pirenne, and a good many historians after him, see the urban renewal which followed as a consequence of the general revival of trade. Yet there was also a general increase in Western farming; the land produced more abundant food and more men than previously—men and food without which the urban expansion, though doubtless stimulated by commerce, could never have taken place. It led to a relatively demographically dense European peasantry who, in the northern countries, thanks to the triennial rotation of crops, was able to achieve increased production from the fields. The peasant, from now on entirely taken up by intense rural labor, becomes a peasant full time. It was then up to the lord to assure his means of defense, and also confiscate it.

Rural prosperity and urban prosperity supported each other from the beginning. They formed the foundations of the European economic order, which was without a doubt a new economic order and one which was destined to last. During the previous centuries, the trade conducted by traveling merchants had brought rare and precious goods—rich cloths, spices, slaves—or basic necessities like salt and wheat. The only thing that counted then, or almost the only thing, was the custom of princes and rich men. But from the eleventh century onward, the proportion of manufactured goods being traded increased. Europe established itself as an exporter of textiles; the glory of Champagne fairs and of the Mediterranean trade grew and established itself. The merchant put down roots. The towns grew, forming an *hipelagos*, pyramids, each coming to a head at a city, a mercantile center of greater importance. And all this in symbiosis with a peasant and seigniorial world which formed the permanent base, the nutritious soil for these successes.

This scheme obviously needs to be touched up and put in context. But this is something with which Otto Brunner is not overly concerned. His case is long and often repetitious, but his conclusions are always brief and always the same. They aim for the general. They take on a slight amount of coloring only when he is dealing with the second "pole" of his model, the peasants, lords, aristocracy, and in general that *Adelswelt* to which he is secretly drawn. He is only too ready to magnify the role and importance of this world, presenting it as a series of mutual responsibilities, with a peasantry at the base which at the very worst maintains a certain degree of freedom and autonomy. He places this *Adelswelt* at the heart of a civilization of *longue durée*, lasting right up to the physiocrats, an aristocratic civilization steeped in a spirit of true and effective freedom, a civilization which was not only coarse and violent in some aspects, but also delicate and full of obvious virtues—as the libraries of the aristocracy (in Austria and elsewhere) bear witness from the fifteenth century onward. The bourgeoisie of the towns have a share in this civilization. Who would not see in this a certain weighting of the evidence, even a reversal of the facts? But a thesis is a thesis.

The West and Russia

The reader will see that my aim is to present rather than to discuss these authoritarian abridgments, and to try to ascertain the inspiration and the will of the man behind these theses rather than their justification. So let us for the moment just accept these sweeping explanations covering the eleventh to the eighteenth century.

These centuries certainly have something in common. For myself, I would rather have said the thirteenth to the eighteenth century, but what does it matter! I would concede fairly readily that there is a certain unity, a certain "horizontal" of time over a long period, from 1000 to 1800. Gino Luzzatto and Armando Saporì have both said so, each in his own way, by asserting the "modernity" of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Armando Saporì, thirteenth century "man," refuses to let himself be dazzled by the Renaissance. Henri Hauser, sixteenth century "man," proclaimed its obvious modernity, particularly by comparison with the eighteenth century. But these gambits are neither familiar to Otto Brunner, nor indispensable to his thesis or even to his method of argument. His own approach is at once more complicated, more arbitrary, and a good deal wider. I was about to say a good deal more dangerous. It consists in a fairly particular dialectic: to see in succeeding historical landscapes what it is that unifies them, and then what it is that makes them different. Which means that, according to the whim of the demonstrator, the deck of cards is either open, showing every

different suit and number, or else it is slant, the cards all gathered together into a single pack in the player's hand. Otto Brunner, in order to assert the global originality of the West, has had to shut a deck having quite a number of cards. For his model is valid above all for the lands and towns of Germany. Would it work equally well for the lands and towns of Italy or Spain? Here and there correspondences can be made to fit, not without a certain amount of deck-stacking. I can imagine in advance that Armando Sapori would be sure to react against this vision of a monotonous West, just as he reacted earlier against the overall view which Werner Sombart put forward of the medieval economy. Still more to the point, what historian would accept the existence of this long period of horizontality throughout a Middle Ages cleft by difficulties and by social and economic crises? The modern state has its beginnings in the fifteenth and even more in the sixteenth century, and the break, the bursting-forth of the "state-society" does not in fact wait until the French Revolution. The same with the market economy, which had penetrated deeply into Western society before the eighteenth century was over. It needs constant ingenuity to circumvent or disguise these difficulties.

The ingenuity of our colleague lies in making us accept from the outset that his initial simplification is in fact a sensitive recognition of the fundamental, unique originality of the West, and then immediately to transfer the discussion outside the West so as to demonstrate, with drums beating and flags flying, the originality of Europe with regard to whatever is not Europe. Who could believe in the unity of the great Weberian abstraction (Max Weber, of course)—the zone of the so-called oriental city which holds in its net all Islam, India, and China? Or that Max Weber really carried his famous urban sociology right to the heart of the problem?

But let us leave these half-formulated criticisms. Carried thus to the eastern frontiers of Europe, we readers are called upon to measure the differences between the Western system and the Russian (that is, the oriental) system. The demonstration immediately denies the possibility of what some historians have claimed, namely that Europe, or the West if you prefer, begins again, reorganizing its destiny according to the Russian setting with a certain distinctive coloring, some lagging behind, and some distortion due to the hostility of the forests and swamps and the thinness of the population. To which one could also add the enormous cataclysm of the Mongol invasion.

Otto Brunner, contrary to some Russian historians but supported by others, maintains that there was a lagging behind even before this cataclysm and that, even more significantly, there was an intrinsic difference between the social structures of the two worlds. Novgorod was not an enclosed city on the Western pattern, but an "ancient" city open to the

surrounding countryside and integrated into its life. Russian cities were certainly of considerable size and population, but they were few and distant from each other: Kiev, for instance, or Moscow. They did not rely on a pyramid or reservoir of smaller towns, as was the case in Europe. Besides, they would not or could not keep a monopoly of crafts to themselves: side by side with an urban industry of wretched craftsmen thrived a lively, polyvalent peasant industry outside urban control. The Russian winter freed an abundance of manpower in the villages during several long months, and it was impossible to try and compete with this. As for the peasants, they had been poorly rooted for a long time. Their cultivations remained itinerant. They set themselves up to the detriment of the forests, but it was not a case, as in the West, of subjugating this virgin land once and for all, establishing lasting plowland and tearing out the stumps of the trees. Rather as in America opened up to the European peasant, waste of territory was the rule. In addition the artisan was no more entirely free in his movements than the peasant. Final characteristic: right up to the time of Peter the Great commerce in Russia was concerned with natural products, salt, furs, honey, and with luxury goods and slaves. It was itinerant and caravan-based. These archaic characteristics complete the picture. Europe, on the contrary, had a semifree peasantry, towns which were independent or nearly so, and an active, advanced mercantile capitalism with its merchants settled in one place. Western towns meant craft industry and trade outside state control, like so many free little islands ready for short or long distance capitalism. This is one of the urban innovations, in Max Weber's sense, of medieval Europe: neither the "ancient" city nor the "oriental" city knew anything of such a division, or rather such a distinction, between town and country, industry and agriculture—in a word, of this supercharge of the urban.

Is this demonstration sufficient to illuminate the "Russian enigma" of which Gerhard Ritter was speaking again only recently? ⁶ Or the bewilderment of the German observer faced with this immense landscape? The reader must decide. For myself, I wonder what would be the outcome of a parallel drawn like Otto Brunner's, but this time between Europe and the colonial America of the Iberians (from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century). In the New World, at the end of the fifteenth century, a new Europe more or less successfully took root and began again. It began again with the cities. These cities either preceded the slow construction of the countryside (Rio de la Plata), or else relied on an Indian peasantry. Wherever they were, these towns were open to the countryside; they were "ancient" cities functioning according to ancient formulas and dominated by the great landowners—the *homenes bons* of the municipal councils in Brazil, or the great *hacendados* of the Spanish

cabildos (magistracies). Within the whole, two or three modern cities at the very most, large, extremely isolated "Russian-style" cities were established, in viceregal Mexico, Recife during and after the Dutch, Bahia with its sugar exporters, Potosi. Add to this picture trade conducted by mule train, and what have we got? Europe before the eleventh century? Or Russia before Peter the Great?

What Is Social History?

These questions and half-criticisms do not really deal with more than a half or a third of this energetic book. Otto Brunner not only intends to enclose the whole irreducible originality of the Middle Ages in the West, to sing its praises, tell of its greatness, and indeed to almost assert its "miraculous" nature. Unless I am very much mistaken, he also intends to make use of the illumination shed by this great spectacle in order to turn (with more ingenuity than real forcefulness or clarity) toward the present—second encircling operation—and toward the very structures of the historian's profession, third and final operation including and transcending all preceding ones.

In actual fact, the Middle Ages in the West before the eighteenth century are separated from us by a variety of obstacles. Belonging to an age more or less cut off from the distant roots of Europe by all the mutations and discontinuities of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, how can we historians and men of the twentieth century easily rediscover the realities of a social history of Europe between the eleventh and the eighteenth centuries? The very words we use, especially economy, but society too, and even state, tend to mislead us. Behold us cut off in spirit from our object, from that distant landscape, by a smoke-screen in which everything merges: ideologies (which have their birth in the eighteenth century), those ideas charged both with truth and with illusion; old explanations; the very attempts being made by the new social sciences. In a chapter which I only partially understand despite having read and reread it, we are put on our guard against the anachronistic, against the obvious perils of a past-present dialogue, and are placed moreover face to face with the heavy responsibilities of history. But is this not in fact a hunt for ideologies in the manner of Karl Mannheim? Are we not being invited to a hunt for witches and will-o'-the-wisps? Are ideologies running out of steam, or not? Maybe. But on either side of their curtain, what judgments, what comparisons the author commits himself to—such as no foreign reader could hope to catch immediately. Who is being judged, who condemned or, if you prefer, whom are we being directed to love? For this obvious enigma of the old social order, as lying outside the profit and tyrannies of the state or

ideological distortions, must have a meaning. *A laudator temporis acti* is never without ulterior motives relating to the present.

These uncertainties constantly create difficulties in advance and undermine our ability to formulate an answer to the fundamental question which our colleague has asked, about the destiny and justification of history. But let us nonetheless carry on as if we were sure of the road ahead.

Right from the very beginning, just like Henri Berr in 1900 at the beginning of the *Revue de synthèse*, Otto Brunner attempts to elevate himself above the compartmentalization of particular histories. They are numerous, one knows: the history of law, of institutions, the history of philosophy, of ideas, of literature, of science, the history of art, religious history, the history of daily life, economic history. One knows equally well (cf. Heinrich Freyer) that they each have their own rhythm, their own rate of respiration, their own chronological dimensions. Now these individual sectors have to be mastered, to be dislocated. Thus the empire of *Kulturgeschichte* is heteroclitic, exaggerated. In the same way, although it is never clearly stated, economic history, which is simply one sector, cannot inflate itself to the dimensions of an entire history without excess or scandal.

In short, history allows only of two general planes: on the one hand, the political plane, on the other, the social plane. As in descriptive geometry, the entire body must be projected onto one plane or the other. It is, of course, myself who suggests such a debatable image. Otto Brunner would say more precisely that social history for him is not a specialty (*Fach*), a particular sector (*Sondergebiet*), "but a way of considering one aspect of man and of groups of men in their communal life, in their social regimentation (*Vergesellschaftung*)." As for political history, he used to claim (in 1936) that everything came under that heading: "Any purely historical problematic," he wrote then, "derives from political history. . . . From this point of view, all history is, in the strict sense of the word, political history."⁷ Today he is of a quite different opinion, not that I would reproach him for it—quite the contrary. In substance, what he says is that history always has man as its object, but that there are two ways of considering him: first of all in the mirror of social history, "and then the internal construction, the structure of social relationships, will be in the foreground"; or, the second possibility, as reflected in political history in the Aristotelian sense, and then the object to be seized would be political action, "men's self-determination." I repeat, two planes between which everything is, or can be, divided. It is impossible for the historian to confuse them or, which comes to the same thing, to present them both simultaneously.

It would be important to follow page by page the allusive sketch of a

history brought back to the political arena, such as is presented in this book, which is so ready to assert and never to contradict, and is thus almost entirely free of the negatives which would serve as reference points: the history of man as a "political man" is, if I have understood properly, in some measure the history of his movements, his actions, his free choice, and even sometimes a *Machtpolitik*, and thus it tends often enough toward traditional history. On the other wing of the diptych, to the extent that social history profits by immobility and the *longue durée*, we find all the heavy thickness of social reality, resistant to all inclemency, to crises and sudden shocks; it is strong in its slowness and its powerful inertia. Economic history, thrusting forward, wears itself out trying to stir this great mass and to pierce its heavy armor.

Besides, for the Middle Ages, let us repeat, there is but one history, social history. It has devoured and assimilated everything; the state has broken down into the various bodies of which we have already spoken: cities, seigneuries, village communities. The market economy may well have its crises and even its convulsions, but the *oeconomia* simply turns in on itself. It is sheltered from small storms. The centuries belong to it. The state and the economy come later.

All I have sought to do throughout this article is to clarify for myself and for my French readers a way of thinking which is almost entirely unfamiliar to us. Contact has so long been lost between French and German historians that often all that is needed is for a word to be misunderstood, an assertion to be too hastily made, for the discussion to lose all meaning. Both parties would surely gain from an exchange of ideas which have become to such an extent foreign to each other. So I have as far as possible forbidden myself the mental attitude of a critic, leaving the initiative in the debate to Otto Brunner.

At the end of this confrontation, have I been convinced? That is another question. I am torn between a certain sympathy and some fairly lively misgivings. In truth, a social history of the *longue durée* could hardly avoid seducing me, even though it seems to me to be only a social history among many others, those which move slowly, those which are permanent, those which are inert, those concerned with structures, and over and above these relatively still waters we must also place the not inconsiderable figure of the conjuncture. Nor, of course, is there anything to be said against a political history which, whether "Aristotelian" or not, rejoins the traditional history of the last century. But it seems to me that there is everything to be said against Otto Brunner's authoritarian dichotomy, the duality in which he encloses history. Whatever the reasons or the ulterior motives which dictate his choice—and they remain unclear for the French reader—I cannot subscribe to it.

At the risk of being taxed with an unrepentant liberalism, I would claim on the contrary that all doors seem to me good when crossing the multiple threshold of history. Unfortunately, none of us can know them all. The historian first opens the door with which he is most familiar. But if he seeks to see as far as possible, he must necessarily find himself knocking at another door, and then another. Each time a new or slightly different landscape will be under examination, and there is no historian worthy of the name who has not been able to juxtapose some of them: social and cultural landscapes, cultural and political landscapes, economic and political landscapes, and so on. But history gathers them all together; it is the sum total of all these neighbors, of these joint ownerships, of this endless interaction.

So Otto Brunner's two-dimensional geometry could not satisfy me. For me, history can be conceived only in *n* dimensions. This generosity is indispensable: it does not dismiss onto a lower plane, that is, outside the explanatory area, the cultural insight or the materialist dialectic, or any other analysis. Its fundamental definition is of a concrete, *pluridimensional* history, as Georges Gurvitch would say. Beyond this multiplicity, needless to say, each individual remains free—some even feel called upon to assert the unity of history, without which our job would be unthinkable or would at least lose some of its dearest ambitions. Life is multiple, but it is also one.

Notes

1. *Neue Wege der Sozialgeschichte: Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1956).
2. Vol. 177 (1954), p. 469 *et seq.*
3. Vol. 40 (1954), p. 1 *et seq.*
4. This quotation (working in the very same direction as Max Weber's thought) which, for two or three reasons I find so enchanting, is from Heinrich Freyer: "The age of enlightenment [*Aufklärung*] is not only the historical phenomenon of limited bearing which we commonly intend by this expression, but also a fundamental tendency, we might even go so far as to say, above all, a trend of European history."
5. Cf. Gertrud Schröder-Lembke, "Die Hausvaterliteratur als agrarisch-geschichtliche Quell," *Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie* (1953).
6. *Lebendige Vergangenheit* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1958), "Das Rätsel Russland," p. 213 *et seq.*
7. Otto Brunner, "Zum Problem der Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte," in *Zeitschrift für Nationalökonomie* 7 (1936): 677.